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ABSTRACT

Recent trends in teacher education may eliminate courses in the cultural foundations of education from professional education curricula. The emphasis on the development of new teacher education programs and on teaching degrees that emphasize academic studies over professional education courses have led many governing bodies to question the need for such courses. The decline of student enrollment in traditional baccalaureate teacher education programs and other structural changes have also contributed to this trend. There is obvious disagreement about the nature of teacher education problems and their solution. The Southern Regional Education Board has recommended increased general education requirements, while rejecting a fifth-year requirement. Others have called for the elimination of undergraduate majors in education in favor of a combination of an academic major, an internship, and a master's degree in teaching. Another recommendation has been to restrict entrance to teacher education programs and to limit the number of colleges that train teachers. It is unlikely that many of the reform proposals will be implemented due to the lack of effective leadership. Education officials need to play a bigger role in determining what educators need to know and why. (GJ)

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EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN TRANSITION: TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION

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EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN TRANSITION: TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION

The title of this paper, originally suggested as "The Past, Present and Future of Educational History: A Status Report," which was to emphasize trends, various views, and the future, was expanded to emphasize the entire area of cultural foundations of education and the role of teacher education in proposed and implemented policy initiatives on the state and national scene.

The media are filled with alarming information about the current state of teacher education. The information that teacher education, and indeed the entire field of public education, is under attack, is not news. But, as Robert W. Cole, Jr., reports in a recent issue of PHI DELTA KAPPAN, the attack is so broadly based and the attackers so influential that current teacher education programs, including of course, cultural foundations of education, face the very real possibility of extinction.[1]

Some of the more recent examples of this trend toward the deemphasis of professional education courses is the trend toward the proliferation of "new" teacher education programs with various labels. Called "Master Teacher," "Career Ladder," "Master Administrator" and similar names, these programs emphasize the attainment of a level of measurable performance on the job for inservice educators as the basis for attaining additional recognition and higher salary increments rather than, as was frequently the case in the past, the acquisition of additional graduate credit and graduate degrees. This continuing trend may result in less demand for graduate courses in professional teacher education and in the academic departments on the college and university level.

Even before the so-called "career ladder" and similar educational reform programs evolved in Tennessee and elsewhere at the behest of ambitious

politicians, school boards were, in various ways, openly or subtly, discouraging teachers in many areas for pursuing courses and graduate degrees in academic and professional education areas because of the added expense involved in the employment of teachers with advanced degrees. Other boards insisted that, if advanced degrees were pursued with the goal of earning additional salary supplements based on the amount of education of the teacher, the courses must be in the areas of certification, endorsement, or teaching field rather than in teacher education courses.

A third factor contributing to the apparent deemphasis of the cultural foundations, and of teacher education courses in general, especially at the undergraduate level, has been the trend toward the establishment of five-year programs leading to a Master of Arts in Teaching degree with the majority of courses in academic areas, and only a token amount of course work in professional teacher education courses chiefly devoted to an internship, taken on the graduate level during the fifth year. Foundations of education courses, except for learning psychology and educational research, are largely ignored.

As reported in the media, the growing dissatisfaction with the quality of both graduate and undergraduate education is leading various groups, including politicians, boards of trustees, and other governing bodies to assume more direct responsibility for academic decision making.[2]

The opinion is expressed that the various governing bodies new assertiveness is beginning to redefine the long-standing principle that they should act only as policy makers and overseers and should not interfere in academic affairs, including curriculum design and program changes.[3]

In a major report released in February, 1985, a select committee of the Association of American Colleges accused faculty members of bearing a "main responsibility for a collapse of structure and control" in the undergraduate

curriculum and called on trustees to "ask searching questions about whether academic programs are of high quality and consonant with their institutions' mission."[4] The report said, among other things, that the undergraduate curriculum was in disarray and that faculty members should be the key factor to restoring coherence and integrity to the baccalaureate degree. Presumably, these comments are directed at the teacher education programs as well as the other undergraduate areas.

A conclusion of a report by Kenneth P. Mortimer of the National Institute of Education, presented to the Association of American Colleges, is that the problems of undergraduate education could not be separated from those of elementary and secondary schools or graduate education.[5]

In the discussion of the quality of teacher education programs, obvious disagreement about the nature of the problems and their solution appears. The Southern Regional Education Board, in a report released in June, 1985, stated that strengthening "the general-education curriculum is the key to improving the training of schoolteachers."[6] The S.R.E.B. commission report "found that education majors had had a weak grounding in the liberal arts," and concluded that "a remarkable proportion of the teachers finish college without any exposure at all to important disciplines."[7]

The report rejected, however, the addition of a fifth year to the program required for graduation and certification as recommended by the National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education. The S.R.E.B. commission report stated that "It makes no sense to add a fifth floor to a four-story house if the foundation of that house is shaky."[8] The conclusion was "that, until the current four-year college program truly represents college-level work, it makes no sense to extend its length, except as to accommodate noncredit remedial work."[9]

About the same time that the S.R.E.B. commission report was released recommending that the states should lead the education reform movement, a group of education deans from twenty-eight campuses, known as the Holmes Group Consortium, issued a report calling for the elimination of undergraduate majors in education, and the creation of an elite corps of highly trained professional career teachers whose preparation would include an undergraduate major in a "standard academic subject normally taught in the schools, substantial period of internship and a master's degree in teaching or education."[10] This plan, which has been developed over the past two years, comes at a time when a number of groups, including the major teacher unions, are striving to reform and reshape teacher education programs.

The leadership of the deans' group, named in memory of Henry W. Holmes, a former dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, acknowledged that they faced difficult obstacles, including the effort to obtain broad support of faculty and administrators on their own campuses, the major teacher unions, and state officials. They noted, however, that state officials have become increasingly important in the movement to reform education.[11]

A controversy over the concept of precluding undergraduate majors in education, historically the most prevalent form of teacher preparation especially for elementary school teachers, developed at the conference held in June, 1985 in Racine, Wisconsin.

David Clark, in the October, 1984 issue of PHI DELTA KAPPAN, notes that more than 70 percent of the four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. operate state-approved teacher education programs. Clark states that a few of the programs "are dreadful on all counts, liberal arts education, subject-matter majors and professional preparation."[12] He comments further that many four-year colleges are "caught up in teacher education because they

wish to compete with other colleges for students."[13]

Clark suggests that as long as teacher training is conducted at the undergraduate level, all bachelor's-degree-granting institutions will insist on their right to train teachers and that, if no teacher education can be offered at the undergraduate level, the competitive advantage in students recruitment will not govern an institution's interest in teacher education. He concludes that entrance to teacher education programs should be limited to students holding a bachelor's degree with a subject-matter major and that teacher education be carried out in no more than two- to three-hundred colleges and universities.[14]

Only a few of the proposed or implemented policy initiatives in teacher education have been mentioned in this report. Hendrik D. Gideonse, writing in the PHI DELTA KAPPAN, offers a pessimistic assessment of many of the new proposals, however. First, he concludes, leadership in teacher education is widely and thickly distributed among the states and geographical regions. Furthermore, even where such leadership exists, there is a tendency on the part of state policy makers not to listen to that leaderhsip. Finally, teacher education is divided geographically and organizationally within its own ranks. Although Gideonse takes a gloomy view of the current wave of reforms and contends that few, if any, will have lasting effects, he feels that teacher educators can take positive steps to assist in the improvement of the preparation of teachers.

Teacher educators, he states, should be candid about their shortcomings and acknowledge the constraints under which they work, which explain, to some extent, the problems which face them; yet, they are in a position to articulate what inservice teachers and other professional educators need to know and why, and they must be involved with the work of professional organizations,

including teacher unions, to assist in the improvement of the conditions of professional practice and to further the development of a professional agenda for the future, which requires collaboration with state legislators and state executives. Gideonse also emphasizes that college and university teacher educators should be involved with policy initiatives at the state, regional, and national levels and strive to reform what currently lies within their jurisdiction.[15]

In conclusion, from the obvious trends reported in this paper, with the emphasis on the development of new teacher education programs, career ladders or similar performance-based programs, and teaching degrees with emphasis on academic studies to the almost total exclusion of professional education courses, the decline in the enrollment of students enrolled in traditional baccalaureate teacher education programs, and other structural changes, traditional courses in the cultural foundations of education are being eliminated from the curriculum at an alarming rate.

What of the future? The picture appears bleak for the role of the cultural foundations. Certainly, one needs to be very optimistic to encourage promising young graduate students to consider a career in teacher education on the college and university level. Of course, those who have been in the field of professional education for a number of years have seen trends come and go.

With the increasing reports of a national teacher shortage developing, there is hope that educational priorities may be reevaluated and the survivors of this cycle may see a promising day for renewed emphasis on educational studies in the preparation of the teachers of the future--1990, maybe.

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